Contemporary Arabic Literatura

SALAH JAHEEN
For the Love of Egypt
(on the name of Egypt)

a poem

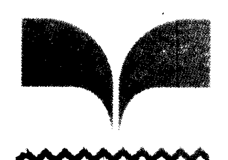
translated into English
with an introduction

by

M.M. Enani



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Contemporary Arabic Literature

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General Editor

M. Enani

Managing Editor

Gilan Fahmi

Layout

Omaima Ali

Graphic Supervisor & Cover-design

Nagwa Shalabi

For the Love of Egypt



Introduction

Salah Jaheen is a major Arabic poet whose name has been associated with the evolution and maturity of the poem in Egyptian Arabic (EA) as opposed to the poem in so-called classical Arabic (an imprecise term which may refer to Modern Standard Arabic – MSA – or to Archaic Arabic – AA). Some of his work has been translated into English verse, the most successful being Nehad Salem's selection of his *Ruba'iyyat* — a collection of pithy poetic treatments of universal themes in the pure idiom of EA. Their epigrammatic quality has ensured their high position among his works but their success has eclipsed the reputation of many other masterpieces, some of which continue to suffer from utter neglect. In my *Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt*, Cairo, 1986, I included a few of his 'other' poems, and Bahaa Jaheen, the poet's son, translated some of his sonnets, published in *Prism*, the magazine issued by the Foreign Cultural Relations Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. The present poem has never been translated, for all its intrinsic merits (as poem) and for all its significance as a historical

document. Superficially read, it may appear to be a poem on the history of Egypt, culminating in a reference to Muhammad Farid as the ideal patriot fighting for the liberation of the land, that is, for political independence. A more careful reading should reveal a good deal more, both about the poet and about his poetry; it should also cast valuable light on a patch of Egyptian history *never* referred to in the poem, namely the days of 'glorious dreams' in which the poet lived and wrote his best work. As I hope to show in this introduction, the poem may also serve as a clue to certain hidden truths, both in what it says and in what *it does not*. As a modern critical concept, 'absence' may therefore be used in our attempt to find the full meaning of the poem.

In the introduction to her beautiful translation of Jaheen's *Ruba'iyyat*, Nehad Salem focuses on the 'heady' dreams of the period — the late 1950s and early 1960s — showing herself to be enamoured of those very dreams that nourished the imagination of a whole generation, myself included. I could refer the reader to that introduction, of course, and save myself any further incursions into modern Egyptian history; but as the title of this poem has

'the name of Egypt' as a central theme, I find myself compelled to revisit those 'heady' days so as to provide a brief framework for the poem.

. To begin with, the original title على اسم مصر contains a deliberate play on the preposition على which in phrasal structures acquires different and continually changing senses — not only *connotations*. The title can mean a number of things according to the context in which it is used, as is the case here. The most immediate sense, if the phrase is preceded by a verb like 'to name' would be '[to be named] *after* Egypt' that is, to acquire the name of Egypt. But then it can mean '*In* the name of Egypt', '*On* the name of Egypt', '*For* the name of Egypt' '*To* the name of Egypt' etc. At the end of a number of long stanzas, Jaheen varies the context to allow for different senses; and I have tried to reproduce the intended, or what I thought to be the intended sense in the translation, without distorting the play on words. But puns are difficult, if not impossible to translate; and an effort has been made to give a hint of each pun in the course of the poem. The present title '*For the Love of Egypt*' has been suggested by a memory of a line in Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, which

seemed apt enough in the circumstances : the word 'name' does not appear at all in it, but then this is, I suppose, a prerogative of the literary translator : it belongs to the 'editing' part of his or her work.

Now the 'times' of Salah Jaheen, whether read in what the poet does not say or in the palimpsest of the poem, may be thought of not only as the days of glorious dreams but also as a period of profound soul-searching. Egyptian political independence, formally and finally sealed by the 1954 Agreement with Britain, grandly referred to as The Evacuation Treaty, had only meant that Egypt was now a country free from foreign military occupation, and a master of her own destiny. As in other post-colonial cases, freedom was qualified by the legacy of foreign domination : the social structure (as well as the culture) could not by any stretch of the imagination be said to have changed at all. The battle won was purely political; very little else changed. Nor was this in any way unusual or extraordinary. The leaders of the 1952 *coup d'etat*, a bunch of high-minded young army officers, realized this fact only too well : their aim in subsequent years was to turn the military *coup* into a full-fledged 'revolution'. They

needed the expertise and help of the older generation, with all the good will which this had involved (though not immediately forthcoming) as well as support from the intelligentsia whose members had been limited indeed. More importantly, however, they needed a public awareness compaign, to use current jargon, so as to mobilize the young, especially, to espouse the cause of the 'revolution'. The print media were easily mobilized, though their public was confined to the élite (who combined older and younger generations) but whose loyalty to the 'revolutionary' cause had not been fully secured. Less easy to mobilize were the so-called masses — the rank and file of the Egyptians who were mostly illiterate and had suffered for generations from endemic and chronic 'poverty, ignorance and illness', the natural legacy of foreign rule. The masses could only be reached by word of mouth, by speeches broadcast on the radio, 'popular' rallies, and songs. The last of these were the most cogent as they were in EA, the language of the people. Poets competed in writing the lyrics required, and the words spoke of a bright future, now that Egypt was ruled by Egyptians. And Salah Jaheen's star shone bright here.

The so-called 'tripartite aggression' against Egypt in

1956 assured the majority of Egyptians that the old enemies of Egypt — the former colonial powers (Britain and France) had not given up their hope of dominating the country. True, they were joined by Israel, but the latter was seen only as a 'tool' : the real danger came from the big powers and it was now more important than ever to be alive to their threats. Egypt had won a new ally in the Soviet Union who offered to help with the building of the Aswan High Dam, and she had the full support of her sister Arab states, notably Syria, that confirmed the leaders' vision of a unified Arab homeland — an unattainable dream which had always haunted the Arab imagination. The creation of the United Arab Republic in 1958 (a full political merger between Egypt and Syria) was seen as a step on the road to realizing that dream; and when it broke up in 1961, the event was not regarded as a serious setback. In the following year a *coup d'etat* took place in Yemen and the young enthusiastic army officers, now ruling the country, saw it as a new sign of hope. A re-awakening of the Arab nation was already in progress, and soon armed battalions were dispatched to Yemen, more than a thousand miles from the Mediterranean coast.

Pan-Arab dreams were rich and colourful, though the

bickering continued between the 'revolutionaries' and the 'conservatives'. The power of the dreams was fed by poetic visions, rather than hard realities, and nothing could fire the imagination of young poets more than the past : 'fancy roamed free' and poets liberally indited verses glorifying Egypt–both the ancient kingdom that had conquered the adjoining near-eastern territories and the young Arab Republic which stood on the threshold of revived glory. Poems in MSA were sung by leading singers such as Umm Kolthoum and Abdul-Wahab, and the lyrics in EA were sung by Abdul-Halim Hafiz and most other young singers. Salah Jaheen wrote for Umm Kolthoum 'Revolutionaries' (*Thuwwar* ثـوار) and a host of lyrics for Abdul-Halim Hafiz. His patriotic songs celebrated, ironically, the democratic spirit of Nasser and the benevolent autocracy of his military regime. Other poets writing in EA repeatedly sang the glory of the new era, and a study of the lyrics of the time shows that Egypt was now seen not as a small state struggling to achieve the high-sounding objectives of the 'revolution' (social justice, a strong economy etc.) but as a major power in the Middle East. It was common to see in the press references

to the small and poorly equipped Egyptian army as the 'greatest striking force in the Middle East'. People believed this, not only because the propaganda machine was efficient (it was in fact *creative*) but also because they wanted to believe it. The air was ready for a change, and events somehow happened to help the people believe that a kind of change was taking place : when something went wrong, it was attributed to faults in 'implementation', that is, in the *application* of the idealistic principles of the revolution, never to any faults in the 'vision', the dream which, as dream, had to be divorced from reality and had to be, by definition, unreal. Most people believed what they heard, for all the dissenting voices that cast doubts on the efficiency (even the integrity) of those who ran the country and seemed to own it; and most people admitted that whatever the mistakes made, faults could be remedied. The promise of reviving the glorious past was too powerful to resist; excesses were forgiven and even forgotten : no true revolution could be free from excesses – look at the French Revolution ! A strange phrase was coined at the time to justify the specially heinous excesses, viz. 'revolutionary legitimacy' (in Arabic *Al-Shar'iyyah*

Al-Thawriyyah الشرعية الثورية) (as opposed to constitutional legitimacy) that is, it was legitimate in a revolution to commit excesses, and some actually got away with murder in the so-called public interest. The dissenters' voices were eventually silenced as the roar of revolutionary zeal drowned all rational, quieter utterances. Poetry was loudest in this roar, reinforced by powerful musical scores which were novel and compelling; and Salah Jaheen's voice rang loud and clear in the chorus of inspired chanters.

The amazing thing was that Jaheen's lyrics were genuinely poetic and rose to unprecedented heights of artistic excellence : his emotions *were* genuine and his power of expression unparalleled. His sensitive eye picked the most expressive scenes and re-created reality in a mixture of authentic EA phrases that appealed to the masses at once and were for ever memorable. His poetic world often clashed with reality, but then very few people knew such reality : any misdeed by the ruling army officers was hushed up or never reported. The information media were given only those 'facts' that confirmed the poetic world of Jaheen and his fellow poets, so that only

'good news' could be heard, and the state of euphoria (albeit unfounded) continued. It was then that I met Jaheen for the first time (1961) on the eve of publishing his first volume of verse at *Dar-El-Ma'rifah* Publishing House, in the presence of Mahmoud Abdul-Mun'im Murad, the Director, Magdi Wahba and Abdul-Hamid Younis, both university professors and eminent literary figures. Our discussion that evening dealt with the poetic imagery of Jaheen. As the subject of my M.A. thesis had been poetic imagery in Wordsworth, I had a good deal to contribute to the deabte.

Jaheen's first volume of verse *'Of the Moon and Mud'* (عن القمر والطين) sold very well. Its appearance marked a turning point in the history of verse in Egyptian Arabic. All critics concurred that we now had not a lower variety of verse in the 'vernacular' but a higher quality of verse in Arabic, albeit in Egyptian rather than in modern standard Arabic (or archaic Arabic). The vital distinction between his poetry and the hitherto composed verses in EA was the imagery. His eye could select the most significant details and manipulate the setting so as to achieve what we now call 'defamiliarization'. Examples of the verses in which

he did this are given in my above-mentioned 'anthology', and are to be found in many of his *Ruba'iyat*. Before the mid-1960s Jaheen had been crowned as 'king' of the EA poem, and his lyrics were everywhere to be heard. His dreams as poet coincided with the newly-born Egyptian dream of glory : the private turned public and was enshrined in people's hearts.

The 'dream' turned sour, however, for the young poet when the Egyptian army suffered its most humiliating defeat by the Israelis in 1967. 'The whole world', he said, 'seemed to collapse : I lost my bearings and seemed to drift in painful nightmares'. He had a nervous breakdown and, in fact, required medical treatment in the Soviet Union. The defeat was only the beginning of what I have called the 'soul-searching' process that had more consequences than any Egyptian 'nationalist' had bargained for. It was the opening act of a whole drama involving the unveiling of 'faults' not in so-called 'implementation' but in the 'vision' itself — a fact which no true poet could relish. The 'revolutionary generation' were woken up to the horrors of reality : the leadership was shown to be negligent, with army commanders failing

to observe the ABC of military rules, and with the whole fabric of government infested with fatal worms of corruption, as one witty intellectual put it. The revelations shook everybody, not merely the poets and artists. More serious than the loss of Sinai and the closure of The Suez Canal, with the loss of the revenue from the Egyptian off-shore oilfields in the Red Sea, was the realization that the rhetoric-created power of the new Egypt was illusory. The system was now shown to be rotten to the core, so that no poet worth his salt could be expected seriously to support it. Perplexity reigned. An essentially romantic poet like Jaheen could not join Salah Abdul-Saboor who satirized the ruling clique and ridiculed Arab leaders; Jaheen would never abandon his long-cherished dream of glory. To lose it, he thought, would be tantamount to losing one's own identity : it was that dream that had made his verse possible in the first place and inspired even his love poems. If the new birth promised by the Revolution had proved too illusory to sustain, even in dreams, other sources of inspiration ought to be found. The leader was still there and he still spoke of eventual Arab unity and of recovering lost ground. But 'speaking' about it did not

bring it about. The years between the 1967 defeat and the death of Nasser in 1970 were the most harrowing for the poet.

Those were difficult times, too, for all Egyptians. The 'obstinate questionings', as Wordsworth puts it, of the post-1967 defeat haunted the intellectual scene and as many answers were provided as there were Egyptian thinkers. In despair, some turned to God and put their money on the other world; others believed that the fight must continue until some sort of solution, not necessarily an explicit triumph, is found; and a third party advocated a compromise which allowed the Arabs to rebuild and perhaps resume the 'struggle' at a later date. Ideas as ideas somehow seemed untenable; and people wanted concrete action to confirm the validity of any line of thought. On the ground, however, an internecine inter-Arab conflict took place in Jordan in September 1970, culminating in a Nasser-sponsored Arab summit that seemed to restore harmony, but reaching the unexpected climax of Nasser's death on 28 September 1970.

With the passing away of the one symbol of Arab

unity that had kept some hopes alive, the Arab dream was now in tatters, though the *Egyptian* dream was not. Again as Wordsworth says, this was the world in which to find happiness, 'or not at all'. And a host of hitherto 'pan-Arab oriented' poets soon turned to Egypt as a symbol of continuity, 'a miracle of survival' as a contemporary British historian put it, and *writing in Egyptian Arabic* was only one sign of things to come.

Bayram Al-Tounsi had written in EA, and so did Fuad Haddad, though representing two different schools, the first lyrical and satirical, the second ideological and abstract. Jaheen combined the lyricism and the satire of the first with the unobtrusive ideology of the second in his early verse : but his was predominantly that of the painter-philosopher (being one of the best cartoonists ever produced by Egypt). He was the poet who felt first and thought second, and his capacity for epigrammatic expression, as shown in his *Ruba'iyyat,* helped him to be the 'thinking heart' or the 'feeling intellect' of Egyptian Arabic verse.

Jaheen's turning to Egypt was tantamount to turning to himself in a serious and sustained process of self-examination. In harmony with the other intellectuals, artists and poets who lamented the passing away of Nasser, he could not see his successor, Anwar El-Sadat, as a character capable of inspiring any true visions. Brought up and nourished on the rhetoric-created dreams of Nasser, the poet needed another symbol — someone to keep the flame of passion alive. And every poet needs one. But Sadat appeared too prosaic for Jaheen's taste, as was the case with his dream-bred generation. 'Such a poor substitute for Nasser', they said in unison; asked who else they wanted, they simply said 'Nasser' ! *Hence the total absence in the present poem of any reference to either Nasser or Sadat,* as though a mental block prevented the poet from referring to the immediate cause of the quandary. The history recounted in this poem stops as a period many years prior to the revolution, with a glorification of Muhammad Farid, dying alone in exile, as the subconscious image the poet created of himself.

But turning to himself had also meant that the poet was seeking more permanent sources of assurance, as well as more confident bases for poetic contemplation. Like

Wordsworth when shocked by the horrors of the French Revolution, the poet went back to the past, both personal and public. In the deep recesses of his mind he could find the images of childhood needed to ensure the authenticity of his earlier vision, and in the daily scenes of contemporary Egypt that *vision* seemed alive enough. Daily life is sufficiently concrete to prevent the mind, as the 'imagist credo' has it, 'from gliding into a process of abstraction'. The simple 'acts of kindness and of love' of which Wordsworth spoke were a confirmation of a quality in man which no politics could obliterate. It was a quality proven by ancient and modern Egyptian history, and shown to be intrinsic enough for the vision to be revived. There were difficulties, however, as the selective reading of Egyptian history shows that the poet wanted to recover a faith that had been almost irrevocably lost. It is this that gives the poem its *tension*, as the forces fighting for supermacy in the poem are often equal in power. When I met the poet in the mid-1970s, he seemed to have overcome the old dilemma, to have regained his faith completely, but underneath the cheerful disposition was a lurking grief — quiet, deep and never openly expressed.

The structure of the poem owes its vigour to this tension. The pull towards the past is met with an equal pull towards the present — all but thinly disguised — and the amounts of influence given to each are more or less equal. In so far as the poem represents a personal crisis, albeit resolved in the identification with Muhammad Farid, it may be seen as semi-autobiographical; but it is also a crisis of a public mind pulled in opposite directions by forces difficult to explain except in visionary terms. In the opening stanza, the persona is the typical Egyptian citizen taught by centuries of foreign rule and humiliation to steer clear of trouble, that is, not to get involved in politics or anything related to public life. He tells us that he is indifferent to whatever happens, keeping himself to himself, finding it no business of his if the images of palm trees are upside down in the water; but the way he says it shows that he is far from being indifferent — hence the tension, rather than the paradox. As the persona continues to recount his tale, other voices (personae) share in the recounting. The tones of the following parts change continually to suggest something of a polyphonic structure: the slavish acquiescence (or apparent indifference) of the

opening stanza gives place to an inquiring voice in the third, then to a heart in agony in the fourth (a directly autobiographical one). More voices crowd in : the fifth has a touch of satire as we are invited to wonder at the change of the name of Egypt to — Egypt ! Historically true, the fact is that since the breakup of unity with Syria, Nasser had decided that Egypt should keep the 'union' title, that is The United Arab Republic, but Sadat in 1971 revoked that, and recalled Egypt 'The Arab Republic of Egypt' ! Stanza Six seems to introduce a new persona, the closest in the poem to the poet himself. From now on other images of Egypt appear to reinsure continuity, and the speaker becomes difficult to identify. Stanza nine is in MSA, not in Egyptian Arabic, which is maintained in stanza ten, but turns decisively to EA in the last two lines.

The polyphonic structure, helped by the change in tone and language, helps the poet to reach the 'historical' survey that, in Stanzas 13 to 16 helps the poet regain his own voice, so that the re-enactment of parts of Egyptian history from the Pharaohs onward, recovers for the poem the satiric tone. His mythopœic imagination turns the flood of the Nile into a Tammuz-type legend, with a strange

glance at the present. Stanza 17 refers sarcastically to the Arab conquest of Egypt before advancing suddenly to 19th century history. The Orabi mutiny is quickly referred to in the next stanza before the tone changes yet again in stanza 22 — and MSA is used in quatrains. The eleven quatrains pertain to a different persona and are apparently intended to prepare the reader for the climactic struggle for independence by the two leaders of the Nationalist Party (الحزب الوطنى) Mustafa Kamel and Muhammad Farid.

This brief account of the changing voices culminating in an implied identification with Farid suggests that for the first time in Egyptian Arabic poetry the poet has a heightened sense of structure, carefully designed to present a unified vision. But, as I have said, what is *absent* is as important as that mentioned. The poet has felt that the early 'visionary gleam' had finally 'passed away from the earth' and that 'shades of the prison house' were closing in on the growing man (as Wordsworth would have it) with the years that bring an unwelcome 'philosophic mind'. The end is tragic — perhaps the only one in Jaheen. Even his elegy on the death of Bayram Al-Tounsi is not. I cannot help feeling that autobiography plays a more important

part here than critics have been willing to admit. Unusual strains of real chagrin colour many parts, especially the ones in the poet's own voice, but it is difficult to disentangle those strains from the tunes of the other personae as, with sophisticated architectonics, the poet balances the tones in sustained tension. I have felt, too, that behind the tension there is that sense of impossible reconciliation that dogged the poet in the last years of his life. This and other aspects of the poem gave me a hard time in translation. I have done my best to reflect the tones whenever I thought it possible. I have tried, too, to give the English reader an adumbration of the differences between EA and MSA. But then translation is a strange and hazardous business : in trying to 'imitate' a superb original, one may produce only a near equal, with something inevitably lost in the process. The translator may be forced to resort to 'cultural transposition' in the course of cultural transference, however faithful his or her attempts are. Rather than provide 'notes' to throw light on the culture-specific aspects of the text, therefore, I have resorted to 'paraphrase' at times. Often enough a pithy expression is diluted in paraphrase, — a fault I readily

admit. As I have dwelt on these and other difficulties of translating this poem in my *Literary Translation*, Cairo, 2001, I shall go no more into them.

I do hope, however, that by publishing this parallel text edition of the poem, any shortcomings on my part will be recognized and, perhaps, forgiven.

M.M. Enani
Cairo, 2001



For the Love of Egypt

النخل فى العالى والنيل ماشى طوالى

معكوسة فيه الصور . . مقلوبة وأنا مالى

يا ولاد أنا ف حالى زى النقش فى العواميد

زى الهلال اللى فوق مدنة بنوها عبيد

وزى باقى العبيد باجرى على عيالى

باجرى وخطوى وئيد من تقل أحمالى

محنية قامتى . . وهامتى كأن فيها حديد

وعينيا رمل العريش فيها وملح رشيد

لكنى بافتحها زى إللى اتولدت جديد

على اسم مصر

The palm trees are tall and towering,
The Nile running, unwavering,
Wherein reflections are upside down,
No concern of mine,
For, dear folks, I keep myself to myself,
Like a carved figure on a column
Or a brass crescent,
On top of a slave-built minaret,
And just like all other slaves
I toil to provide for my family
Trudging along with steps as heavy
As my burden,
Stooping as though iron laden
With Areesh sand and Rasheed salt
In my eyes,
But I can still open them wide,
As if reborn to be named
after Egypt

مصر . . التلات أحرف الساكنة اللى شاحنة ضجيج

زوم الهوا وطقش موج البحر لما يهيج

وعجيج حوافر خيول بتجر زغروطة

حزمة نغم صعب داخلة مسامعى مقروطة

فى مسامى مضغوطة مع دمى لها تعاريج

ترع وقنوات سقت من جسمى كل نسيج

وجميع خيوط النسيج على نبرة مربوطة

أسمعها مهموسة والا اسمعها مشخوطة

شبكة رادار قلبى جوه ضلوعى مضبوطة

على اسم مصر

"Misr" is what we call Egypt;
Three consonants resounding
With tumult astounding,
Winds whistling and waves surging
The stamping hoofs of horses galloping
Drawing [a carriage with girls] ululating,
A bunch of difficult tunes reaching
My ears one by one, pressed
Into my skin pores, with my blood,
Winding rills and canals watering
The tissues of my body, with every thread
Perfectly tuned, whether heard
As whispers or as plangent sound,
For the radar network in my heart
Is perfectly tuned
to the name of Egypt !

وترن من تانى نفس النبرة فى ودانى

ومؤشر الفرحة يتحرك فى وجدانى

وأغانى واحشانى باتذكرها مالهاش عد

فيه شيء حصل أو بيحصل أو ح يحصل

أو ربما الأمر حالة وجد واخدانى

أنا اللى ياما الهوى جابنى وودّانى

وكلام على لسانى جانى لابد اقوله لحد.

القمح ليه إسمه قمح اليوم وأمس وغد

ومصر يحرم عليها . . والجدال يشتد

على إسم مصر

The same tune rings again in my ear,
Moving the joy indicator
In my passion "counter",
Reviving many a song
I have missed too long :
Has anything really happened,
Is anything happening or will happen ?
Perhaps 'tis only a sudden passion
For I have been bandied up and down
By love — and only too often !
Perhaps it is an idea
In need of urgent expression !
Why is wheat called wheat,
Today, yesterday and tomorrow,
Why should Egypt be denied that,
Why should a heated argument start
on the name of Egypt ?

ولما زمانى رمانى عليل
نسيت كل شىء عن حبيبى الجميل
لكن هو أبداً
أنا مانساهوش
نسيت مشيته وصوته كان شكله إيه
ورسمة شفايفه
ولمسة إيديه
نسيت نظراته
نسيت لون عينيه
وقوس الحواجب وسهم الرموش
لكن هو أبداً
أنا ما أنساهوش
نسيت اسمه وحكايته وعرفته فين
وعشنا سوى العمر
وإلا يومين
وكان من البشر
والا طير بجناحين
نسيت حتى كان له وجود أو مالوش
لكن هو أبداً
أنا ما انساهوش

When time ordained I fall ill,
I forgot everything about
My beautiful sweetheart,
But then I never forgot my love !
I forgot the way she walked
What was her voice like
The contours of the lips,
The touch of her hands
The way she looked
The colour of the eyes
The eye-brow arch
The eye-lash arrow
But then I never forgot my love !
I forget her name, her story
- where I came to know her,
- whether we shared a life-time
Or a couple of days
Whether she was of human kind
Or a winged bird,
I even forget whether she existed at all !
But then I never forgot my love !

قطعوا الأغانى وطارت نشرة الأخبار

دارت على كل دار فى الكوكب الدوار

يا حاضرين اعلموا الغايبين بأنه فى مصر

اتغيَّر الاسم منذ الآن فأصبح .. مصر

ضحك التاريخ ضحكته المشهور بها واندار

ودخل مناقشة مع الجغرافيا عما صار

هل نعترف بالبيان اللى أذيع العصر

أم ننتظر مصر تطرد إسرائيل بالقسر

وساعتها تحصل بكل جدارة يوم النصر

على إسم مصر ؟

The radio concert was interrupted
For a news update, which circulated
Quickly, reaching every home
On the spinning planet !
It said : "Let those who are present
Tell those who are absent
That the name of *Misr*
Has now changed to *Misr* !"
With its famous laugh, history
Began an argument with geography
About the "incident" !
Should we accept the statement
Of the afternoon broadcast
Or wait for Egypt
To kick out Israel, forcibly,
Ensuring that we're worthy,
On the day of victory,
of the name of Egypt ?

على اسم مصر التاريخ يقدر يقول ما شاء

أنا مصر عندى أحب وأجمل الأشياء

باحبها وهى مالكة الأرض شرق وغرب

وباحبها وهى مرمية جريحة حرب

باحبها بعنف وبرقة وعلى استحياء

وأكرهها وألعن أبوها بعشق زى الداء

وأسيبها وأطفش فى درب وتبقى هىّ فى درب

وتلتفت تلقينى جنبها فى الكرب

والنبض ينفض عروقى بألف نغمة وضرب

على اسم مصر

About Egypt history can talk forever

She is the prettiest and the dearest, none better !

I love her when ruling the earth, east and west,

And love her when a wounded war prisoner !

I love her violently, gently and shyly,

I hate her and curse her with a love- sickness true;

We may part company : I may leave her and go,

But whenever in distress she'll find me near by,

With a pulse beating in the veins melodiously

for the name of Egypt!

مصر النسيم فى الليالى وبياعين الفل

ومراية بهتانة ع القهوة . . أزورها . . وأطل

ألقى النديم طل من مطرح منا طلّيت

وألقاها برواز معلق عندنا فى البيت

فيه القمر مصطفى كامل حبيب الكل

المصرى باشا بشواربه اللى ما عرفوا الذل

ومصر فوق فى الفرندة واسمها جولييت

ولما جيت بعد روميو بربع قرن بكيت

ومسحت دمعى فى كمى ومن ساعتها وعيت

على اسم مصر

Egypt is the evening breeze and flower girls
Selling garlands of jasmine,
A decrepit mirror at a café corner
Where, whenever I looked in,
A companion was sure to look in-
Abdullahi Al-Nadim !
Egypt is the framed picture of Mustafa Kamel
Hung on the wall at home, and loved by all !
A typical Egyptian master
With the moustache none could conquer !
The girl in the top floor balcony is Egypt
And her name is Juliet,
A quarter of a century after Romeo's visit
I came on the scene and wept,
Wiping my tears with my sleeve I felt
conscious of the name of Egypt !

مصر السما الفزدقى وعصافير معدية

والقلة مملية على الشباك . . منديّة

والجد قاعد مربع يقرا فى الجرنال

الكاتب المصرى ذاته مندمج فى مقال

ومصر قدامه أكثر كلمة مقرية

قريتها من قبل ما اكتب اسمى بإيديا

ورسمتها فى الخيال على أبدع الأشكال

ونزلت أيام صبايا طفت كل مجال

زى المنادى وفؤادى يرتجف بجلال

على إسم مصر

Egypt is the azure sky and birds flitting,
The water-jar on the window sill, inviting,
Grandpa is squatting, in his paper involved,
The ancient Egyptian scribe himself, in an article
absorbed !

Egypt is the word most often read,
I even read it
Before I had learnt to write,
In my imagination I gave it
The most beautiful forms,
And as a young man went into every orbit,
Like a crier who,
With a heart beating with awe,
Sang the glory
of Egypt !

رحيلا رحيلا بغير هوادة

رحيلا فإن الرحيل سعادة

عبادة

إرادة

سيادة

ولادة

رحيلا . . إلى أين ليس يهم

وليس يهم بأى وسيلة . . .

أجيراً بلقمته فى البواخر . . .

على واحد من جياد القبيلة . .

على مقعد فى ذرى الجو فاخر

وتملأ لى الكأس بنت جميلة . .

على قدمى . . أو بفكرى . . أهاجر

أبادر

أغامر

"Trip away ! Trip away, make no stay !"

Depart as departure is joy today !

It's adoration, full volition,

Sovereignty and regeneration !

Depart to whatever destination,

The means does not matter

Work as a "general hand" on a steamer,

Or ride one of the tribe's horses, galloping,

Choose a luxury seat in the air flying,

With the cup topped up by a beauty, smiling !

Physically or in thought I migrate,

Something to initiate,

Embark on an adventure !

أخاطر

أسافر

ولكن إلى أين ليس يهم

إلى حيث لا تعبر الأفق شمس

إلى القطب .. أو حلقة الاستواء ...

إلى حيث يسمع للجن همس

إلى باطن الأرض أو فى الفضاء

إلى مرفأ الغد .. أو أرض أمس

أرى كل شىء ومن أين جاء

وأفعل ما قاله القدماء

من الفقراء

أو الحكماء

أو الأمراء

أو الأشقياء أو البلهاء فليس يهم

لقد قيل وهو الكلام المهم

اللى يعيش ياما يشوف

واللى يمشى يشوف أكتر .

Take the risk of departure !
But destination is immaterial —
Perhaps to where no sun
May cross the horizon
To the pole or to zone equatorial !
Perhaps to where no whisper of demon
May be heard in the womb of the earth
Or in outer space !
Never mind the place !
It may be tomorrow's wharf
Or yesterday's territory
I see everything and the source thereof,
And do what, down history,
Everyone else had done,
A pauper or a prince
A sage or a dunce,
For it has been said once,
Which is here the core :
"For him who lives on, there will be sights galore
But if he moves about, sights will be more and more !"

شفت الجبرتى بحرافيش الحسين وبولاق

بابن البلد ماشى زى النمس فى الأسواق

بالفلاحين ع المداخل من بعيد وقريب

بالأرنؤوط بالشراكسة بكل صنف عجيب

مترصصين سور رهيب مزراق فى ريح مزراق

كأنهم لا بشر ولا خلقة الخلاق

ومصر فلاحة تزرق بين رقيب ورقيب .

من غير أبو الهول ما ينهض ناهضة شايلة حليب

والصبح بدرى الجبرتى ينام وقلمه يسيب

على اسم مصر

I now looked in Gabarti's [history] book,
And saw the daring paupers [who took,
In old Cairo, to scavenging —]
In Al-Hussayn and in Boulak —
I saw the typical Egyptian gallant,
Who's bold and cunning, [scanning
The markets, to eke out a living !]
I saw peasants on the outskirts, near and far,
Albanian and Circassian soldiers bizarre,
Filing up in formidable lines
A wall of inhuman stature
As though not God's creatures !
I saw Egypt in the shape of a peasant woman,
Managing to steal her way
Away from the guard's eye,
Before the Sphinx had risen,
With a milk pot on her head,
As in the small hours Gabarti went to bed
Interrupting his tale

about Egypt !

مصر اللى عمر الجبرتى لم عرف لها عمر

وطلع لقاها مكان مليان عوام وزعر

جعيدية غوغاء يجيبوا تملى وجع راس

وخليط أفارقة هنادوة روم ملل أجناس

والترك فى القلعة والمماليك خدودهم حمر

كان عمرها ستلاف سنة . . كلها سنين خضر

بس الزمان يختلف زى اختلاف الناس

ناس تبنى مجد وحضارة وناس بلا إحساس

وناس تنام لما يزحف موكب الأحداث

على إسم مصر

Gabarti could never know how old Egypt was,
Born to find her full of commoners
Plebeians and rabble in infinite numbers
Causing perpetual headaches,
A motley assembly of Africans,
Of Greeks and Indians,
And races diverse,
While in the citadel were the Turks,
And red-faced Mamelukes !
Egypt is six thousand years old,
Of perpetual fresh green,
But times change, as people do,
Some building a civilization of glory untold,
Others quite insensate had been,
Others had slept when the tide of events
Rose high and crept

on the shore of Egypt !

أنا اللى اسمى حتحور . . أنا بنت رع

مثال الأمومة ورمز الحنان

تفيض حلماتى وتملا الترع

وتسقى البشر كلهم والغطان

أنا ربة الحب حتحور أنا

أنا السيدة المنجدة المغرمين

وكم من محب ف هواه انضنى

دعانى وطيبت خاطره الحزين

أنا طيبة إنما طبعى صعب

وديعة . . ولو ثرت بطشى مهول

ما اشوفش اللى قدامى لو ألف شعب

أدوسهم وتجرى دماهم سيول

My name is Hat-Hur; I'm Ra's daughter;

A symbol of kindness, of motherhood a paragon !

My nipples flow, to fill the rills with water,

Quenching the thirst of both land and men !

Hat-Hur am I, the Love Goddess !

The lady to help every kind of lover !

Many a lover in distress

Has called and got both solace and succour !

I am kind but never passed over,

Meek but, provoked, a ruthless avenger !

I care not for the enemy numbers,

Even if a myriad soldiers,

I trample them under foot, tear them asunder,

And have their blood running in rivers!

*

ويوم رع مافات بسناه فى السما
وكل العيون خايفة تنظر إليه
وجاله القمر خلقته معتمة
وعدى قصاده . . . وضلم عليه
يا ويل اللى فتّح ف أبويا العظيم
يا ويل من تطاول يا ويل من ضحك
يا ويلك يا مصر مصيرك أليم
أنا اللى اسمى حتحور أنا ح امسحك
يحاول يهدينى رع ما اسمعوش
وادمر واطيح فى البلاد والعباد
أنا الطيبة . . كنت زى الوحوش
سفكت دماء البنات والولاد
دبحت المحبين فى عز القبل
هدمت المعابد على المنشدين
قلبت على النحاتين الجبل
حرقت الغيطان هم والفلاحين

When Ra's radiance shone in the sky,
The eyes were too timid to glance at him,
The moon, with a grim face, passed by,
Outshone by Ra', the moon looked dim !
Woe to him who dared challenge my father great,
Woe to him who was insolent or cracked a joke,
And woe to Egypt from a painful fate,
For even I, Hat-Hur, will run amok,
Won't listen to Ra's pacifying words,
Will destroy and go on the rampage
Targeting people and their land;
A beast whose wrath none could assuage,
The blood of boys and girls did shed,
Cutting the throats of lovers as they kissed,
Pulled down temples on the cloister's head,
The sculptor under the mountain was buried,
And both farms and farmers were burned !

*

لحد ما رع نادى ع الآلهة

وقال صبوا فى النهر كل النبيذ

وشفت المياه حمرا ومزهزهة

وظنّها دم الضحايا اللذيذ

شربت انتقاما شربت شربت

وأنا بالعن المفترى والغبى

وحبة بحبة عن الوعى غبت

ونمت على النيل فى ضى أبى

وقمت . . بكيت من فؤاد أم ثكلى

ونهنهت فوق صدر مصر العريض

كل العالم المبدروين جنبى قتلى

وكان دمعى ينصب فى النيل يفيض

Then Ra' called on every other God, commanding
Each to pour in the river all their wine !
The water looked red and scintillating,
As though it were the victims' blood so fine !
I drank in vengeance, sipping and gulping,
Cursing the fools who each other opposed,
Gradually I lost consciousness and, sleeping
On the Nile Bank, by my father caressed,
I at length woke up, weeping
With the tears that flowed
From the heart of a mother
Who's lost her offspring,
On the broad shoulders of Egypt I cried,
Lamenting the people that about me lay dead,
Wincing at the sight of their blood,
And the tears I did shed
Caused the Nile to flood !

*

واقول ليه يا مصر ولادك كده

يا إما المذله يا يتجبرّوا

يا خوفى يا فرحة قلوب العدا

ويا ندمى لو ما يتغيروا

ومن يومها والنيل فى نفس المعاد

يفيض كل عام قبل فصل الخريف

بلون حمرة الدم يملا البلاد

ويملا النسايم بعطر مخيف

بعطرى أنا اللى اسمى حتحور أنا

وعطرى مخيف وحنون وطرى

يفوح بس مرة فى كل سنة

ويهمس يا مصر اذكرى . . واحذرى

Now to Egypt I say

Why should your children be that way ?

They either live in humiliation

Or commit acts of oppression !

I fear for them, though their enemies love it.

If they don't change, we shall all regret it !

From that day on, the Nile regularly

Each year, just before autumn, had a flood,

Filled the entire country

With water the colour of blood,

And filled the breeze wherever you went

With a strange and fearful scent !

It's my own perfume, the Hat-Hur fragrance,

Fearful, kind and soft in texture,

It brings joy every year, but only once,

Whispering : Egypt, beware, and remember !

نهايته مصر اللى كانت أصبحت وخلاص

تمثال بديع انقلب وانفه فى الطين غاص

وناس من البدو شدوا عليه حبال الخيش

والقرص رع العظيم بقى صاج خبيز للعيش

وساق محارب قديم مبتورة ف ابو قرقاص .

ما تعرف اللى بترها سيف والا رصاص

والا الخراب اللى صاب عقل البلد بالطيش

قال ابن خلدون أمم متفسخة تعيش ليش

وحصان عرابى صهل صحّى جميع الجيش

على إسم مصر

Well, that's it ! Egypt that was,
Had gone bust,
A statue overturned, with the nose in the dust !
Some Bedouin folks struck up camp here,
Using ropes of canvas queer!
The sun-disc of Ra' the great,
Was now a hot plate for baking bread !
In Abu Qirqas, there's an amputated leg
Of a veteran soldier dead
You'll never know, even if you investigate,
Whether what did it was a sword or a bullet
Perhaps the devastation
Had made people insensate!
Ibn Khuldoun says that a nation
Dies should it disintegrate,
But then the neighing of Orabi's stallion
Woke up every battalion
to reunite Egypt !

حصان عرابى جميل حصان عرابى أصيل

حصان عرابى رشيق القد ديله طويل

يسهر مع الخيل طول الليل يتكلم

ويقول أراء رغم إنه ما كانش متعلم

ويقف فى عابدين وياخد زاوية البروفيل

للرسامين يرسموه ونشوفه جيل ورا جيل

ويعدى كالريح على المجاريح ويسلم

وحافره ع الصخر فى التل الكبير علّم

ولما صابه انفجار القنبلة اتألم

على إسم مصر

Orabi's horse is beautiful
Of pedigree Arabian breed,
Orabi's horse is graceful,
A long-tailed steed,
With other horses he spent the night talking,
Venturing opinions, though uneducated,
Standing in Abdeen square, a pose imposing,
A profile which painters painted,
Went down our tradition
From generation to generation;
Like the wind he passed
By the wounded, and greeted;
In Tel-el-Kebir there's a rock
That bears his hoof's mark !
When hit by an explosion,
He felt the pain of a nation —
of Egypt !

والمس حجارة الطوابى وادق بكعابى

يرجع لى صوت الصدى يفكرنى بعذابى

يا ميت ندامة على أمة بلا جماهير

ثورتها يعملها جيشها وما لها غيره نصير

والشعب يرقص كأنه عجوز متصابى

إنهض من القبر واحكى القصة يا عرابى

يطل لى رافع الطهطاوى م التصاوير

شاحب ومجروح فى قلبه وجرح قلبه خطير

وعيونه مغرروقين بيصبوا دمع غزير

على إسم مصر

Now I touch the stones of the turret,
And stamp the ground with my heel;
The echoes in the fort reverberate,
Reminding me of the torment I feel :
How pitiful is it to a country
Without a popular movement,
Where a rebellion is mounted by the army
Alone in discontent,
While the people danced to the tune along,
Like an old man pretending to be young !
"Rise from the grave, Orabi" I said,
"And recount what then happened" !
But Al-Tahtawi's image appeared,
Pale, haggard, though smart,
With a serious wound in the heart,
His tears richly flowed
for the love of Egypt !

مالك سلامتك بتبكى ليه يا طهطاوى

قال لك عرابى . . انكسر بسلاح أوروباوى

وسلاح أوروبا ماهواش المدافع بس

ده فكر ناقد مميز للثمين والغث

قلناها ميت ألف مرة بصوت جهير داوى

بس الحماقة لا ليها طبيب ولا مداوى

ولا حد م الخلق بالخطر اللى داخل حس

الغفلانين اللى خلوا العقل صابه مس

قالوا الخطر هو فكر أوروبا لو يندس

على إسم مصر

"Goodness !" I cried, "why do you weep today ?"

"It was Europe's weapons that caused Orabi's defeat,

"Not only her guns", he said, "but, mark what I say,

"It's critical thought, the ability to discriminate,

"And separate the chaff from the wheat,

"A thousand times we said it, loud and sure,

"But nothing can foolishness cure !

"No one had felt the impending danger,

"While the ignorant had caused the mind to wander,

"Claiming that the real danger

"Was to allow Europe's thought to filter

through to Egypt !"

أحسنت فى القول صحيح يا واد يا متنبى

جبت اللى جوه الفؤاد عن مصر متعبى

وحكمت بالعدل لكن بعضنا انظلموا

«يا أمة ضحكت من جهلها الأمم»

العلم كان عندى من صغره متربى

لكنه هاجر وعدى البحر متخبى

لما الإيران هجموا ثم اليونان هجموا

ثم الرومان دمروا ثم التتار هدموا

ثم الجميع كل واحد جه مسح قدمه

على إسم مصر

*

أيها الديك رفيع الموضع

يا صفيحا فوق مسمار يدور

صف لنا فعل الرياح الأربع

قل لنا . . لو كنت تدرى ما يدور

How right you were, O poet Mutanabbi !
Releasing what had been pent up within,
You passed a fair judgement, though wronging some,
"O nation whose ignorance
Other nations laugh at !"
How right was that !
Knowledge grew up here from the word go,
But then it migrated,
Crossing the sea incognito,
When the Persians then the Greeks attacked,
Then the Romans destroyed
And the Tartars ransacked,
And all underfoot trampled
the name of Egypt !

*

O weather-cock standing on high,

A piece of tin around a nail turning,

Tell us what the four winds do in the sky,

Describe it, if you know what is happening !

قال صه . . فالآن ريح الشرق جاءت
تحمل الضوضاء من سوق المزاد
وتغنى دون لحن كيف شاءت
أنا ريح الشرق أدعى شهر زاد

أنا أحكى ثم أحكى ثم أحكى
وأمامى السيف كالعشب يميل
وبكائى يتساوى مع ضحكى
طالما كان بأسلوب جميل

ثم ها قد أرسل الغرب رياحه
تزكم الأنف برائحة عجب
وتغنى كبغىّ فى مناحة
أنا ريح الغرب لونى كالذهب

أنا صفراء برمل الصحراء
أدفن الخضرة تحتى دون رحمه
أوصدوا الباب بوجهى الحقراء
حسناً فلتصبح القرية فحمة

"Quiet !" he said, "the east wind strikes
With the noises of the auction charade,
Singing out of tune, any way she likes,
"I'm the east wind, my name is Scheherazade !

I spin yarns, tales never ending,
With the blade of the sword near by,
Like a blade of grass swinging;
For me to laugh is the same as to cry,

So long as the style is charming !
Now the west its wind is sending
Which blocks the nose with a strange odour,
And is, like a whore at a funeral, singing;
I'm the west wind with a gold colour !

I am like the desert sand yellow,
Ruthlessly burying the green below !
By the rabble the door in my face was barred,
Well, said I, let the village then be charred !

ثم ها قد أقبلت ريح الجنوب
بدخان الدهن تسرى عابقة
وتغنى إننى أدعى الهبوب
أنا سوداء كبئر المشنقة

أنا سوداء كأفعى هائلة
كرماد النوم ينثر فى العيون
كالعرايا فى المروج الموحلة
سعداء . . تعساء . . يرقصون

وتأتى برهة ديك الصفيح
يلفظ الأنفاس وهو يترنح
دائراً دورته مع كل ريح
وأخيراً صاح كالأسد المجنح

هللويا . . أقبلت ريح الشمال
فى غلالات رقاق راعشة
وهى تشدو بحنو ودلال
ها أنا ريح الشمال المنعشة

Now comes wind of the South,
With the smoke of fat-burning for a smell !
It sang : "my name is the *vile-uncouth*,
As black as is the gallows well !"

I am as black as a boa constrictor coiled
As the ashes of sleep in eyelids scattered,
As naked people in miry meadows gathered,
Who, happy or unhappy, still danced !

The tin weathercock for a while paused
For breath, swaying,
With every gust he now turned
Then, like a winged lion, he started saying :

"Hallelujah !" the North wind is coming,
In a see-through tremulous garment,
Kindly and playfully singing :
"I am the North wind of refreshment !"

إننى وردية مثل العسل
ديدمونا . . هكذا يدعوننى
قد عبرت البحر يحدونى الأمل
لعطيلٍ أسمرٍ . .
يخنقنى !

ومضى ديك الرياح فى دعه
من يمين ليسار يتذبذب
وبدا أضحوكة وإمّعه
وهو مصلوب شهيد يتعذب

وعلى رأى المثل الديك
الصفيح بيدوخ ويا الريح
والديك الفصيح من البيضة
بيصيح ويقول بالصريح

الفكر فوق فى الشمال يا لله الحقوه يا ولاد
لحقوه ولاد من ولاد الأغنيا الأسياد

My colour is pink; I taste of honey,
Desdemona is the name they give me,
Have crossed the sea, so hopefully,
For a dark Othello to strangle me !

The weathercock continued to turn,
From right to left swinging,
Characterless, an object of fun,
Crucified and martyred in agony !

As our proverb has it
A cockerel of tin
Is lost in the wind,
But a cockerel of talent
Is out-of-the-egg eloquent
And is now explicit :

Thought is in the North, so run and catch it !
Some did, sons of the high and mighty !

وهم راجعين رموه م الباخرة فى البحر

ونزلوا حكموا فى ظل الإنجليز والقصر

ومصر فى الشمس بتغربل كلام منعاد

عن ابن بنت ابن حنت وطارق بن زياد

والإنجليز راضية بالخطباء وخطب الفخر

خطيب يهز الرؤوس وخطيب يهز الخصر

وخطيب يموت موتة الأبطال قتيل القهر

على إسم مصر

But they dropped it in the sea,
During the homeward journey !
They came back to rule, under the king's power
And the British army !
While Egypt, in sun and shower,
Retold tales of valour,
Of some ancient hero, the magnificent
Tarek Ibn Ziyad, and the descendant
Of what's his name, the brilliant !
The British were happy with the orators
And the glory-singing orations,
One made the listeners nod in gratification,
Another made them dance with joy,
But a third "would die" as a champion,
A victim of oppression,
in the name of Egypt !

والإنجليز معجبين بمراسم التأبين

مات مصطفى كامل اتملت البلد صواوين

والمشرقين شوقى جابهم لجل يبكوا عليه

آه لو عرف هم أيه دلوقت وبقم ايه

المشرق الأولانى هو شعب الصين

هزم التخلف بتنظيم إشتراكى رصين

تنظيم يروح اللومان على طول كده برجليه

والمشرق التانى ينحط الحديد فى إيديه

مليون شهيد يعنى ثورة تخض شوقى بيه

على إسم مصر

هل مصر موميا جميلة صورتها فوق النعش

يعشقها مجنون ينادى عليها ولا تطلعش

The British admire the ceremony
Of paying tribute to the dead;
When Mustafa Kamel died, the country
Was with tribute-paying venues filled,
Shawqi the poet said the two orients
Now had tears to shed !
Oh how I wish that Shawqi could now see
What both have come to be,
The first is the Chinese people who did
Beat backwardness with a socialist system solid,
Socialist enough to qualify
For our most notorious prison !
The second, if we the law apply,
Would equally for handcuffs qualify !
It's the million martyrs of Algeria,
Sufficiently revolutionary
To make Lord Shawqi worry
about Egypt !

Is Egypt a beautiful mummy
With the face painted on the coffin cover
And called upon in vain to rise by a mad lover ?

هل مصر نار صفصفت والنفخ فيها محال

والأرض نشعت على رمادها استحال أو حال

سألت أنا الرافعى كان عجز ولا بيسمعش

لكن عينيه كانوا يحكولى قصص ما اشبعش

يقولولى ما تخافش مصر بخير وعال العال

مصر الجبرتى ومصر الرافعي حال غير حال

انظر محمد فريد أعظم وأرقى مثال

على إسم مصر

خد الكتاب فى يمينك وانظر الترقيم
عند المحبة وعند الموت في حرف الميم
تلقى محمد فريد بينهم مقيم ع العهد
وتلقى وجهه المدور زى قرص الشهد
مليان حماسة وكياسة وجدعنه وتصميم

Is Egypt a dead fire impossible to rekindle,
When the damp ground had turned
The ash into mud ?
I asked ar-Rafi'i, the historian bold,
But he was hard of hearing, having grown too old,
There were stories, however, which his eyes told,
And my thirst for these could never be quenched.
"There is nothing to fear", the eyes said,
"Egypt is quite all right, in fact splendid !
"Ar-Rafi'i's Egypt is not the same as Gabarti's
"And here is Muhammed Farid,
"The highest and best that ever belonged
to Egypt !

Now hold the book and look up the entry —
Rather the entries for "love" and for "death",
Muhammed Farid will there be,
Committed to the vow, till the last breath,
His round face, sweet and glowing,
Is filled with zeal, wisdom, resolve, chivalry,

على ايه مصمم ؟ . . يسهّم زى كل زعيم
ويقول على الثورة مهما اتطلبت من جهد
أنا مش عرابى اللى وأدوا ثورته فى المهد
أنا بابنى فى السر شىء صعب المنال كالفهد

على إسم مصر

محلول مركز من السكر فى كباية
وف قلبه خيط يتلضم حبايه حبايه
سكر نبات بللورات الماظ بتضوى ضى
وتفضل الألماظات تكبر شوى شوى
لحد ما العقد يبقى فى الجمال غاية
ده الحزب فى الشعب نضرب المثل آيه
الصلب والسايل الاثنين سوا يا خىّ
تنظيم محمد فريد فى كل قريه وحى
بللوره بتشع بالثورة اللى يومها جى

على إسم مصر

What are you resolved to do ? I wonder !
But he, leader-like, must ponder !
"On Revolution" is his answer,
"Whatever the effort required !
"I'm not Orabi, whose rising
Was nipped in the bud,
I am, rather, in secret, working
On something as hard to catch as a leopard
for the sake of Egypt !

In a saturated solution of water and sugar,
With individual grains hanging on a thread down
Sugar crystals form, diamond-shaped, and glitter,
And the diamonds gradually grow and shine,
Until there is a string of beads, a necklace fine !
This is the party within our nation,
A perfect instance of solid and fluid in unison !
Muhammed Farid's party
Is in every district and village,
Radiating crystals which presage
The revolution sure to come
to Egypt !

العقد ألماظ ورقبة مصر لايقا له

ضيّع فريد كل أرضه عليه وأمواله

وفجأة حاكموه ويا لله نفوه عن الأوطان

وحرب عالمية أولى ووفد م الأعيان

وثورة والإنجليز انحطوا وانشالوا

مين اللى نظم فلول الشعب ده بحاله

إزاى جميع البلاد تنهض فى نفس الآن

القاهرة إسكندرية منفلوط أسوان

وبعيد يا ولداه فريد مرمى وحيد شرقان

على إسم مصر

It is a diamond necklace sufficiently fit
For the neck of Egypt;
On it Farid had spent every bit
Of money and property,
But then a trial took place suddenly,
And he was exiled — and left his country !
There was a first world war and a delegation,
Representing the landlords of the nation,
[Negotiated independence with the British]
Then came the [1919] Revolution,
Which made the British livid with rage !
Who could organize the entire nation
From all walks of life and so engage
All cities in Egypt in one uprising,
With a perfect timing,
Cairo, Alexandria, Manfalout, Aswan ?
But the exiled Farid was all alone thirsting
for Egypt !

السيمفونية اسمها الثورة على المحتل

سنة تسعتاشر اتعزفت فى كل محل

تأليف محمد فريد ألفها من سنوات

وكتب لها النوتة بوق وبيانو وكمنجات

عزفوها من غير قيادته وجمعهم ما اختل

غير وقت صرف الأجور لما النفر ينذل

من وقتها وغلوشت نغمات على نغمات

وسعد زغلول زعيم مشغول فى الانتخابات

يخطب ويضرب بإيده يطبع البصمات

على إسم مصر

The title of that symphony was "rebellion
Against occupation"
In nineteen nineteen it was played everywhere,
As composed by Muhammed Farid many years
back !
The score, too, was there,
With notes for the trumpet, the violin and piano !
And even without a maestro,
None was out of tune !
However when the wages were to be paid,
"A time of humiliation", 'tis said,
Tunes began to clash and discord was to be had,
Sa'ad Zaghloul, the leader
Had elections to consider,
Making speeches, hitting with his fist, leaving prints
on the name of Egypt !

وف أوضة عريانة فيها كل شىء بردان

رقد فريد وحده بالحمى وبالهذيان

وقام وقف ع السرير فى تلج ألمانيا

ينده يا مصر اسمعى اللى مفارق الدنيا

وصيتى الثورة لاشتراكية والبنيان

ثورة بحق وحقيق مش حركة م الأعيان

ما تغمضوش عن وحوش الغرب ولا ثانية

ح تروح وحوش لنجليز تطلع وحوش ثانية

وسقط ونطق الشهادة ونظرته الحانية

على إسم مصر

*

In a bare room where everything was cold,
Farid lay alone, feverish, hallucinating;
One day he stood on the bed in freezing
German weather and called :
"O Egypt ! Listen to him who's leaving this world !
This is my last will and testament :
Let there be a socialist revolution,
Let there be construction,
Not a landlords movement
But a real revolution !
Keep your eyes open to the beasts of the west,
The British beasts will go; there will be others!"
He fell, muttering his profession of faith,
With a passionate look in the direction
of Egypt !

*


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